

# socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

# Shhh...

## Censorship at work

**PLUS**

**Throwaway Ministers**

**Mental health in capitalism**

**Italian Marxist Antonio Labriola**

**Nature as ideology**



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ground:  
David Bowie**  
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# socialist standard

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## Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up



capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in

Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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## Capitalism is not the end of history

ACROSS THE world capitalism holds centre stage. Its cruelties and iniquities are too numerous to count, yet almost everybody imagines it is here for good, and for our general good, and that it represents the last stage in human development, in fact, that it is the 'end of history'. All one can do is to press for minor reforms, for no major change is deemed possible or even desirable.

In the wings, however, a new society is waiting. It is not supposed to exist, but it is there just the same, the next stage of history, the one that comes after capitalism. It stands impatiently in the shadows as the world grinds on regardless. This society is different in one basic respect from all that has gone before - it is based not on material scarcity but on abundance.

Global abundance of material resources is a new concept for most people, yet the practical obstacles are disappearing fast, and have already disappeared in the

case of food, shelter, water and energy. In a world of abundance, why bother to buy and sell? Why bother to have wars over buying and selling? Why bother to have hierarchies of rich people making poor people's lives a misery? Why bother with 'cheap' options like pollution? Why bother with money, that carrot we wear ourselves out chasing? In an abundance, the only issues need be: how to put our collective resources to best use, and how to make the decisions fairly and in a way which involves everyone.

This social upgrade - which we call World Socialism - is a revolutionary advancement for the human species which will make 21st century capitalism look like the Dark Ages, yet the debate is not yet out in the open. Hardly anyone dares conceive of a society after capitalism, so powerful is its hold on the collective mind. But we dare.

The Socialist Party is like no other

political party in Britain. First, because it doesn't want power for itself. In the new society we advocate, there will be no power structures anyway and our organisation would cease to exist. Second, because we have no leaders or followers and think instead that collective decision-making - democracy - is the only suitable way to operate a free society. Do you know of any other organisation that can say this? We doubt it.

So what's the catch? The catch is, we will not lead you and we can't do all the work for you. You have to be your own leader, else democracy is meaningless. So if you're prepared to stand up for yourself, don't wait for other people to do it first - get in touch with us and help out. Capitalism is doing everything it can to destroy the idea of World Socialism before it can get off the ground. All that has to happen, for it to succeed, is for you to do nothing.

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## Desperate Deal in Davos

Not many people can be unaware that there is an antibiotic crisis looming, caused by big pharma moving out of antibiotic research into more profitable fields of enquiry, like hair restoring or erectile dysfunction. Ask most people why this is happening and they will probably tell you it's because drug companies are run by greedy psychopathic bastards who couldn't care less about public health.

Back in October 2012 this column pointed to the fact that, for a number of very good reasons, drug companies simply couldn't make any money out of antibiotic research and that this amounted to the human race being failed by its own market system.

Confirmation of this has been provided by pharmaceutical companies themselves. At the recent Economic Forum in Davos, 85 drug companies signed a joint declaration promising to invest in antibiotic research if governments would agree to develop 'transformational commercial models' (BBC Online, 21 January).

The document, signed by Pfizer, Merck, Glaxo-Smith-Kline and Johnson & Johnson among others, stated that the current economic development model had 'largely failed' and that the 'formidable' (ie expensive) challenges of antibiotic research were the reason most companies had pulled out of the field.

What they mean is, they're not charities and they're not going to run at a loss, and if governments won't help meet the costs, new antibiotics aren't going to be made, even if we die of bubonic plague as a result.

This is as direct from the horse's mouth as it gets. Now even capitalist

companies are frustrated at the operations of the market system. Will governments work out a deal with the drug companies? Maybe.

What speaks volumes is that they have to have this discussion at all. If capitalism really worked the way its promoters and propagandists like to claim, we wouldn't need all these special fixes and deals and arrangements and restructurings and 'transformational commercial models'. It would just work. Trains would run. Houses would get built. People would get fed. Antibiotics would get made.

The fact that it doesn't work is attested by, among other things, these desperate Davos conferences. Instead of an economic powerhouse, capitalism looks more like a patient under 24 hour supervision in an intensive care unit, kept

alive only by the greatest of collective will and effort.

This isn't the first time capitalism's economic logic has failed the entire human race. In 2006 the Stern Review described climate change as the 'greatest market failure the world has seen'. Well, so far, but a sudden outbreak of death by gonorrhoea, laryngitis, TB or tetanus from a minor cut might very well change people's minds about that.

One wonders what it will take to make people realise that abolishing capitalism isn't just one of several viable options, it's already an urgent survival imperative.

Either capitalism goes, or homo sapiens might. This planet isn't big enough for the both of us.

## Public Eye Disorders

'Rock stars', says Homer Simpson with reverential awe, 'is there *anything* they don't know?'

It's fair to say that some rock stars can let their sense of self-importance run away with them. To some Hollywood film stars too, hypoxic inside their own ego-bubbles, the concrete world outside may look like a miasma of hallucinations.

Take the bizarre recent case of actor Sean Penn who, having secretly met with the fugitive Mexican drug baron El Chapo, then stated in a straight-faced interview that the Mexican government was trying to get him assassinated by giving him the credit for El Chapo's recapture.

To any Mexican drug cartel bosses who might be reading this, please don't bump off Sean Penn in a fit of vengeful pique, because his films are mostly quite good and, besides, what the hell? He's an actor, someone who pretends for a living. Even during his interview, he looked like someone studying the part of someone trying to be a political 'player'. In reality he must have realised he was hopelessly out of his depth. 'Are you afraid?' asked the interviewer. 'No', says Penn, wearing that resolute, well-studied hard-man look. He was probably bricking it, as any normal person would, but you'd never know it because, of course, he's an actor.

When actors think they're undercover agents or international ambassadors or intellectual giants or political supermen, it's a sign that being too addicted to your own story can make you lose the plot. But you can understand why they get deluded, when the public is so obsessed with them.

Several studies have suggested that celebrity worship is associated with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem,

drugs, alcohol or eating disorders (see for instance 'The Psychology of Celebrity Worship' at <http://tinyurl.com/hz5nucc>). Are there many people in capitalism with one or more of those problems, would you say? Hmm. How about nearly everybody?

So that would explain the celebrity worship. And how do the rock and movie celebs themselves deal with being treated like gods? Clearly, in some cases, it goes completely to their heads. But not in all cases. One interesting suggestion is that the less monomaniacal among them suffer a form of 'celeb guilt'. 'They know in the deep recesses of their minds that they are not deserving of the accolades and privileged lives that they lead' says Gad Saad in the blog *Homo Consumericus*, so they try to compensate by showing the world that 'they are much more than a mere celebrity' (<http://tinyurl.com/zroy528>). In other words, 'doing good works' or, as the Victorians used to call it, 'noblesse oblige'.

Believe it or not, people sometimes ask us why we don't try harder to get rock stars or movie celebs into the socialist movement. Their star-power, and their money, would get us instant attention, surely? Saad cites a study by Young and Pinsky that supports the argument that celebs mainly pursue fame for fame's sake ie that they are self-selecting narcissists rather than high-minded artists. So maybe not the sort of people who would easily understand the concept of democratic equality. Besides, as one well-known UK celeb recently did, they might be on fire for revolution on Monday, then tell everyone to vote Labour on Wednesday, then change their mind again on Thursday. Friends like that we don't need!

PJS



*It wasn't called 'black death' for nothing - necrosis of the nose, mouth, arms and fingers in a patient with bubonic plague, from US military medical textbook*

## Words and propaganda

Dear Editors

I read 'What is the Islamic State' (*Socialist Standard*, December). I'd also got the *Nation* at the same time and read 'No Cause for War' by Juan Cole. The Paris attacks have filled newspaper pages and the airwaves since 13 November and last week.

The article cites Juan Cole's blog site as a source. Because words have sensuous power, words matter. Cole for his part uses the term 'Islamic State' the first time and then introduces the term 'Daesh' that is commonly used for the group in the Arabic press. It is Daesh that Cole uses from then on.

Propaganda works. We tend to categorise new information according to a generalisation of the prototype that heads each of our mental categories. Using the label 'state' tends to reify a gang of Mafioso or a drugs cartel into a conceptually real state. This is ideological thinking and we should avoid doing it and spreading it.

Look what the USSR did to the perception of socialism through the power of a misapplied word. Cole introduces the commonly accepted term, defines it away and uses the new signifier in its place which I think is perhaps a proper practice to achieve greater clarity.

JOE R HOPKINS. Florida, USA.

## Party News: Election activity

On 5 May there will be elections to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Greater London Assembly. The Socialist Party will be contesting 3 of the 14 super-constituencies in London and one constituency in Wales (Swansea West, which we contested at last year's general election).

In London we will be standing in Lambeth & Southwark once again and also in North East (made up of the London boroughs of Islington, Hackney and Waltham Forest) and South West (Hounslow, Kingston and Richmond). In all, over a million electors will have the chance to vote for a socialist society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production with distribution on the basis of 'from each according to ability, to each according to need', and against the present-day, capitalist society of minority class ownership and production for profit which all the other candidates will be standing for in one form or another.

## Ellen Meiksins Wood and 'Political Marxism'

ON 14 January 14 Ellen Meiksins Wood, a prominent Marxian historian and political economist died. Her book *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* presented a compelling argument that the roots of our present system of society lay not, as is often presumed, in a steady and inevitable increase of mercantilism, but instead with the historically specific conditions that existed in 17th century rural England, where traditional fixed rights to land gave way to variably priced market based leases. For tenants, this meant having to respond to market imperatives by taking an interest in agricultural 'improvement' and increasing productivity, which often involved the enclosure of common lands and an increased exploitation of wage labour. The effect being that producers and landowners became solely dependent on the market for their own sustenance.



This set the dynamic through which our world has been transformed, with market imperatives rather than market opportunities being the driving force. Tenant farmers specialised in competitive production for the market because they needed to in order to be able to continue leasing. Those who failed to compete successfully were eventually made landless. The landless became not only labourers but also consumers as they needed to buy goods in the market which they had previously been able to produce themselves. And so began the cycle where more and more people, and eventually the whole world, is brought under the sphere of market dependence.

Along with Robert Brenner and other colleagues, Ellen Meiskens Wood was associated with 'Political Marxism' which was developed in reaction to more mechanistic and teleological tendencies in Marxism. Political Marxism seeks to highlight the importance of the class struggle and the active social role that groups played within this as they reshaped society. The transition from feudalism to capitalism was the result of a process that was far from automatic. Such a change could only be brought about by a complete rupture with the old relations of human interaction, by forcibly removing the rights that peasants had to their land. The subsequent dependence of both the producer and consumer on the market, something which is specific to capitalism, creates the conditions in which all social struggles are fought.

In order to simply avoid being driven out of the market, employers must maximise profits and cut their costs, this means that there is a constant pressure to cut expenditure on wages and other employee benefits. It is the logic of the market, not the greed or callousness of executives, that causes the interests of the capitalist and the wage worker to become mutually antagonistic. Far from being a neutral place where good enterprise is rewarded, the market is a highly coercive mechanism which dominates both capitalist and worker.

Her other work included studies of ancient Greek society and an Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize-winning criticism of postmodernism. For anyone interested in history and modern society her work remains an essential resource. **DJP**

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# Halo Halo

## Miracles Made to Order

'Second miracle puts Mother Teresa on path to sainthood' said the article in the *Guardian* (18 December). Well, that was lucky wasn't it? They've been keeping their fingers crossed hoping for that second miracle, needed for her to become a saint, ever since she died and the first one took place.

But she did have a few critics. The article noted that a 2013 report carried out by researchers at the Universities of Montreal and Ottawa criticised her 'rather dubious way of caring for the sick, her questionable political contacts, her suspicious management of the enormous sums of money she received, and her dogmatic views regarding, in particular, abortion, contraception, and divorce'. It also noted that 'the vast majority of patients who visited Mother Teresa's mission for the dying had hoped to find doctors to treat them, but instead found unhygienic conditions, a shortage of care and no painkillers'.

So what did these miracles entail? Well, the Vatican isn't giving too many details of the second one. All they're telling us

is that an unnamed Brazilian man was unexpectedly cured from brain tumours after his priest prayed for Mother Teresa's intervention with God. And they surely wouldn't lie about a thing like that, would they?

We do have a few more details of the first miracle, although the late journalist Christopher Hitchens, who looked into it, was not entirely convinced. 'A Bengali woman named Monica Besra claims that a beam of light emerged from a picture of Mother Teresa, which she happened to have in her home, and relieved her of a cancerous tumour. Her physician, Dr Ranjan Mustafi, says that she didn't have a cancerous tumour in the first place and that the tubercular cyst she did have was cured by a course of prescription medicine', he wrote in 2003.

'Surely any respectable Catholic cringes with shame at the obviousness of the fakery' he added.

What, then, are the requirements of a genuine, kosher, Catholic approved miracle? Fortunately we can consult the online *Catholic Encyclopedia* for an explanation of such arcane theological matters.

'In analysing the difference between the extraordinary character of the miracle and the ordinary course of nature, the Fathers of the Church and theologians employ the terms *above*, *contrary to*, and *outside nature*' they inform us. 'Every miracle is not of necessity contrary to nature for there are miracles above or outside nature'. And they helpfully point out 'The term *contrary to nature* does not mean 'unnatural' in the sense of producing discord and confusion. The forces of nature differ in power and are in constant interaction. This produces interferences and counteractions of forces'.

Well, they can't be accused of trying to baffle us with science. You couldn't imagine a more unscientific load of

claptrap. This is like being baffled with pure, unadulterated bullshit.

Cicero, the ancient Roman lawyer who had looked into this hogwash, even before Christianity came along, explained it much more simply – 'There are no miracles. What was incapable of happening never happened, and what was capable of happening is not a miracle'.

NW



## A parasite on parasites

Harry Hyams, who died in December, was one of the 'unacceptable faces of capitalism' in the 1970s, though the then Tory Prime Minister Edward Heath had coined the term in relation to another ruthless capitalist. Hyams's notoriety was based on what he did with Centre Point, for a while the tallest building in London, as described by his obituary in the *Times* (22 December):

'Centre Point was completed in 1966 at a cost of £5.5 million. However, within seven years and still without tenants, its value was estimated at £20 million. In an era of rapidly rising rents, it was worth more as an unoccupied asset.'

A deliberately kept empty 33 storey building in central London was seen as a provocation at a time when the television film *Cathy Come Home*, first broadcast in 1966, had highlighted the growing problem of homelessness.

Strictly speaking,

it wasn't the value of the building itself that went up but that of the land on which it was situated, a prime spot in central London on the corner of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road. In fact, from a Marxian point of view, *value* is not the right word at all. Land, not being the product of human labour, has no value, only a price which depends solely on demand. The price of land is calculated as the rent it is likely to bring in over a period of 20 or 25 years, expressed as a capital sum. No doubt the construction of Centre Point cost £5.5 million but, once built, its value as a product of labour would have begun to deteriorate. The increase to £20 million reflected the demand for the spot of land Hyams monopolised.

Of course – like the price of a house you continue to live in – this was only a notional figure unless the building was actually let (or sold), as it eventually was. But where would the extra £14.5 million have come from? Some would have been due to inflation but the rest would have been pure gain, money for nothing. To get it Hyams didn't have to do anything – didn't have to invest any money, didn't have to employ any workers, didn't have to sell what they produced – just sit back and watch the law of supply and demand work in relation to a building in a

prime spot.

Land monopolists are in a position to hold capitalists who want to use it to ransom, obliging them to share with them a part of the surplus value they extract from their workers. Which is what Hyams did and was the source of his gain. He was a parasite on parasites.

The clamour that 'something should be done about it' went up. A Tory cabinet minister denounced what Hyams was doing as an 'incredible scandal' and a tax on empty office buildings was imposed. This is still in force but, according to Jim Armitage, the City Editor of the *London Evening Standard* (21 December), has had some equally 'scandalous' side-effects:

'Developers with empty blocks demolish them to avoid paying the tax. Others delay the final touches on building work to stop the vacancy clock starting. More still use their empty buildings as storage depots, moving boxes of files from one building to another every three months to satisfy the taxman properties are occupied.'

Trying to patch-up capitalism is a thankless task. No sooner is one tear repaired than another appears, often, as here, the result of the previous repair.

Centre Point is now used for housing – but only for the rich who can afford the luxury apartments it has been converted into.





## Socialism seeks well-being for all

Globally, close to 450 million people have mental health disorders, with most living in developing countries. Many are shut away or locked up. Few are ever treated. There simply isn't enough money in poor countries. And those fortunate to get to a hospital are not likely to get the attention they need because there are too few doctors and nurses. Mental illness has lingered near the bottom of health priorities, well behind threats like malaria, measles and HIV. According to the World Health Organization, most countries in Africa, if they have a dedicated budget for mental health care at all, devote an average of less than 1 percent of their health spending to the problem, compared with 6 to 12 percent in the wealthy countries of the West. At last count, Liberia had just one practising psychiatrist. Niger had three, Togo four and Benin seven. Sierra Leone had none. It is the families of people with mental illnesses who bear the overwhelming costs of care. Physical restraint and chaining the patient is often a last resort for desperate families who cannot control a loved one in the grip of psychosis.

Religious belief is strong in this part of the world and the pastors preach that, through them, God can heal almost any ailment — especially ones thought to be essentially spiritual, like psychosis. Religious camps become makeshift psychiatric wards, with prayer as the only intervention. In Ghana, Human Rights Watch in 2012 visited eight prayer camps. Nearly all the residents were chained by their ankles to trees in open compounds, where they slept, urinated and defecated, and bathed. None of the camps employed a qualified medical or psychiatric practitioner.

'We try to talk people out of going to the camps,' said Dr. Simliwa Kolou Valentin Dassa, Togo's director of mental health services, 'but we cannot tell them to stop if there's no alternative.'

Superstitious beliefs abound in Morocco, about good and bad genies ('jnnun') capable of affecting one's daily life. At the Bouya Omar mausoleum followers claim the mentally ill are healed by the saint's supernatural powers. The saint's modern-day followers profit handsomely from the money paid for healing and mediating between the 'patients' and the jnnun believed to have possessed them, in rituals aimed at casting out the evil spirits.



*Bataan Province, Philippines*

Rights groups allege gross mistreatment of those taken there and say hundreds of people have been kept in chains, sometimes starved and beaten, making the place a by-word for cruelty.

Chad has suffered many years of civil wars which have left many traumatised and with an enormous need for psychiatric help. The majority of Chadians view illnesses such as depression and schizophrenia as having a spiritual, rather than a medical cause. Many believe in the existence of witchcraft and curses. The only psychiatrist, Dr Egip Bolsane, working in the country has his work cut out to convince patients their issues are medical, rather than spiritual.

'Public opinion here thinks that it means something is really wrong in your head, it might be because you're possessed. We need to demystify the more or less diabolical image of psychiatry.'

In Indonesia the term 'pasung' refers to the physical restraint or confinement of 'crazy people'. Most rural districts in Indonesia have no mental health service. It is families that are responsible for preventing harm to others and to the ill person. When affordable treatment was offered almost all patients and families accepted the treatment. The abuse of human rights that 'pasung' represents

is not a product of the callousness or ignorance of families and communities, or by refusal to accept psychiatric treatment, but can be correctly attributed to the lack of basic mental health services. In the end, the only effective strategy for eradicating the practice is to ensure that families and communities have access to such services.

However, in the developed Western countries where such services do exist the treatment of the mental ill is far from satisfactory. In the 1960s the mentally ill were generally liberated from institutionalisation of the old-style lunatic asylums, based on the twin hopes of community mental health care and antipsychotic drugs. Anti-psychotics are effective when well prescribed, but need expert supervision to prevent side-effects and the community mental health clinics meant to safeguard people with mental illness within the community never materialised. Hundreds of thousands of people with mental health problems have subsequently been sent to prison. Worldwide, several million prisoners probably have serious mental disorders.

Capitalism is not a society that cares about the well-being of its members and the mentally unwell are the victims of a sick social system.

**ALJO**



## LONDON

**Socialist Standard** February 2016





From

# NO PLATFORM

to

# SAFE SPACES

We look at **two** arguments for not allowing the free expression of ideas

Last year the militant atheist and ex-Muslim Maryam Namazie was initially banned by the officials of the student union at Warwick University from giving a talk to the atheist, secularist and humanist society there on “Apostasy, Blasphemy and Free Expression in the Age of ISIS”. The justification offered was that the views to be expressed would be offensive to some students, namely, those who still adhered to the Muslim religion. After protests, the student union officials backed down and she was allowed to speak.

Similarly, a petition was launched, which attracted 2500 signatures, calling for the veteran feminist Germaine Greer to be prevented from speaking at Cardiff University. This was because she had expressed the view that men who changed their sex to a woman weren’t really women, a view considered offensive to the LGBT community. This case was worse than Namazie’s as Greer was not going to speak on this but was to be banned merely because of an opinion she had expressed on another matter. In the end she too was allowed to speak.

## No Platform

This argument for not allowing particular views to be expressed (or particular people to speak on any subject) differs from that invoked by the likes of the SWP for not allowing racists and fascists such as the National Front and the BNP to speak. ‘No Platform for Fascists’ was justified on the grounds that the views themselves were dangerous and so should not be allowed to be heard in case people came to accept them.

This was an elitist position in that it assumes that some people – the leftwing ‘no-platformers’ – could hear and read fascist views without being affected by them while others – the rest of us – were liable to be infected if they heard them. This was the same argument put forward by those who wanted to ban *Lady’s Chatterley’s Lover* as obscene and actually expressed at the trial in 1960: that educated men could read it without being corrupted but not their wife or servants.

That censorship is undemocratic and elitist as it involves a minority deciding what the majority can hear or read is the main case against it in general and why we in the Socialist Party never supported, and in fact actively opposed, the ‘No Platform’ policy, practising what we preached and debating against the National Front and other racists (despite the no-

platformers trying to break up the meetings). We took, and still take, the view that people are quite capable of deciding for themselves what to think, and so the way to deal with racists and fascists is not to prevent them expressing their views but to allow them a platform and then publicly confront and refute their arguments. We are pleased to note that this approach is now more widely accepted.

That the majority class of wage and salary workers and their dependants are capable of understanding what is in their class interest is central to the whole case that socialism can only be established if and when a majority have come to want it and to understand what it is and what it involves. To claim that people need protecting from certain views lest they be led astray is saying that the working class is not capable of coming

to a socialist understanding on its own but needs to be led. Which of course is precisely what the SWP and other Leninists think.

## Identity Politics

What about the argument from offence for censorship? It starts from the plausible position that people who are subject to prejudice and discrimination should have a ‘safe space’ where they can be free from this. This does tend to happen anyway as such people meet together in their own clubs, cafes or pubs. But the student union officials want to extend this to a whole university campus and to this end to ban the expression there of views considered offensive to particular such groups.

This change of argument reflects a wider change away from class politics to ‘identity politics’, a change welcomed by the authorities who prefer divide and rule to class unity (though some of them are beginning to have second

thoughts as it also undermines the national unity they want). Minority groups are urged to identify themselves politically as such and to campaign to get gains and concessions only for themselves. Previously both revolutionaries and reformists had talked in terms of getting benefit for the whole wage and salary working class, irrespective of their ethnic origin, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation or whatever.

This class approach has now been abandoned (though not by us) and reformists and do-good liberals have turned to protecting ‘identity’ groups that are subject to prejudice and discrimination, seeing the setting up of ‘safe spaces’ from which the expression of views offensive to them are banned as one way to do this.

But the question remains: which is the best way to deal with



**Soviet censorship: Bolshevik leaders, Red Square, 1919, later edited to remove several individuals including Trotsky.**





**2009: Demonstrators outside BBC Television Centre protesting at the decision to allow BNP's Nick Griffin to appear on Question Time. Griffin's appearance on QT turned out to be a disaster - for the BNP.**

people who hold racist or other prejudiced views? Is it to ban them from expressing them? Or is it to confront them in open debate and refute their views and expose them as dangerous? We see no reason to change our position of favouring the second approach.

### Religion and Politics

In one respect the 'safe spaces' argument for censorship is proving more insidious than 'no platform'. It has led to bans being sought on the expression not just of admittedly obnoxious views but also of views that don't fall into this category but which, on the contrary, are helpful and necessary, namely, the criticism of religion. Ironically it has also led to the SWP being banned because of a rape scandal a few years

ago, but we are magnanimous and defend them being allowed to express their views. Nor is it clear why the 'safe-spaces' want to exclude Islam from such criticism when the expression of its views on women and gays could be considered offensive to such groups. In any event, suppressing a view does not change the mind of those holding it, which surely is the point as in the end changing minds is the only way to overcome prejudice and discrimination. No doubt religious people – and not just practising Muslims – find criticism of

their religion offensive but to ban the expression of such criticism because of this is to re-introduce the old blasphemy laws and extend them to all religions. Quite apart from us being against censoring views in general, this is something socialists cannot accept. Religion is a social issue, even a social problem, that needs to be discussed and debated and, like other mistaken 'solutions' to humanity's situation, confronted and refuted. We cannot accept any policy which leads to the expression of anti-religious views being banned.

Fortunately, the attempts by student union officials to suppress free expression in universities have met resistance which has forced them to back down, but this has not stopped them from keeping on trying. This is why they must be opposed and exposed just as much as the Leninist 'no-platformers'.

**ADAM BUICK**



**Bangkok, Thailand, 2014: Banner threatening prison to any citizen using social media to 'like' or 'share' non-mainstream views that 'insult the institution', ie. the monarchy.**





# David Bowie: ground-breaking artist

**J**anuary saw the death from cancer, aged 69, of David Bowie. No popular music artist of the past fifty years has had as wide and profound an influence. There was a spontaneous outpouring of grief across the world amongst the millions of fans he had accumulated in six successive decades. The same comments were repeated on social media and in the press over and over again: that he had provided not just the soundtrack to their lives, but had inspired and stimulated them artistically and culturally. I became an avid listener of his as a child in the early 1970s and this was a key influence in my becoming a musician myself.

As a teenager growing up in the London suburbs, Bowie was both extremely imaginative and intensely hard working at honing his craft, and he remained so, releasing his latest

album, *Blackstar*, on his 69<sup>th</sup> birthday just two days before he died. He is known for the recurring theme of space travel gone wrong, and the loneliness and alienation so powerfully symbolised by that. He once said of his childhood that he 'felt often, ever since I was a teenager, so adrift and so not part of everyone else... so many secrets about my family in the cupboard... they made me feel on the outside of everything' (interview in 2002 TV documentary, *David Bowie: Sound And Vision*). It was entirely appropriate that he composed the music for the television adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's *Buddha Of Suburbia* in 1993. He understood more than most the psychology of the city and its outer reaches, and always reached out to fellow 'outsiders' of every kind.

His fierce determination in financial matters derived in



part from having had all the receipts from his early years of success siphoned off surreptitiously by then manager Tony Defries, resulting in near bankruptcy despite having sold millions of albums and show tickets. As a former victim of such sharks he took the unique step of never again having a manager, instead himself employing a tiny number of people to deal with his personal, business and publicity needs. They were simply paid fees by him rather than his being paid out by them; he retained all of his own rights. He once sold a future rights issue to his songs, via 'Bowie Bonds', for a fixed period with the rights reverting to him after that, which proved an extremely astute financial move. A couple of years ago his home town of Brixton had honoured him by using his face on the ten pound note of their local currency, the Brixton Pound (a voucher system circulating between local traders).

### 'Crazed'

In a mid-1970s magazine interview he once advocated 'fascism' for England, and in 1976 was set up by the press and accused of making a 'Nazi salute' at Victoria station when greeted by fans on his return from living in Germany. The video of that moment shows him waving and this was freeze-framed to look like a salute. The following year, in 1977, he told *Melody Maker* that his flirtation with fascism had been a result of his being 'out of my mind, totally, completely crazed' at the time. In later years he campaigned vigorously for humanitarian causes and remained a committed Buddhist with a life-long opposition



to the subjugation of Tibet by China. He also opposed the British occupation of Northern Ireland. Regarding racism, he was interviewed by MTV in 1983 and took the opportunity to take them to task repeatedly for limiting the number of black artists they featured.

### 'Subversive'

In a preposterous little piece in the *Times* (13 January) two days after he died, Daniel Finkelstein tried to recast Bowie's prolific promotion of artistic individuality as something for which we should thank capitalism – a view which Bowie would have found ridiculous. Finkelstein claimed that Bowie 'was subversive because capitalism is subversive', whereas in fact the opposite is the case. Capitalism homogenises and destroys individuality, as the human army of labour is moulded into conformity to match the needs of this system and increase profit.

He broke down barriers of every kind, and advanced the possibilities for choosing what to be. This evolution of personal freedoms is not something we can attribute to one influential person. It was clearly part of a much bigger and longer-term global trend. However, he had the brilliant social sensitivity and insight to tap into these moments and accelerate them.

Bowie rose to fame in the early 1970s at a time when 'free love' had been proclaimed as desirable between men and

women, whilst gay relationships were still frowned on, even having been illegal in the UK until the late 1960s. He wore feminine clothes and make-up and challenged conventional sexual roles and behaviour. Large numbers of gay people even now still say that his announcement in 1972 that he was gay (and, later, that he was bisexual) helped them to feel less isolated and more confident in their identity.

### Foresight

He had an intense intelligence and was extremely well-read with a broad encyclopaedic knowledge, which was yet another point distinguishing him from other pop or rock stars. In a 1999 interview with Jeremy Paxman he once again showed great foresight in predicting, with what turned out to be uncanny accuracy, how the internet would rapidly come to dominate human communication (and what the effect would be on the music industry):

'I don't think we've even seen the tip of the iceberg. I think the potential of what the internet is going to do to society both good and bad is unimaginable. I think we're actually on the



Left: Bowie's 'Nazi' salute.

Above: the Brixton pound.

culmination of something exhilarating and terrifying.'

He also said that he had chosen to work in music in his youth as in those days it still had 'a kind of call to arms feeling to it, that this is the thing that will change things' whereas pop music later became a mere career opportunity and that 'the internet now carries the flag for the subversive and possibly rebelliousness, the chaotic and nihilistic... forget about the Microsoft element, they do not have a monopoly.' The audience becomes at least as important as those playing to them, with 'the demystification of the relationship between performer and audience... the point of having somebody who led the forces has disappeared, because the vocabulary of rock is too well known, it's not devoid of meaning but it's certainly only a conveyor of information not a conveyor of rebellion. The internet has taken on that.'

This was in 1999, when the evolution of the internet was very much less developed than it is now. Bowie was the first artist to have a dedicated website, or to make his material available online, or to offer his own web server facility ('bowienet'). In that same interview, Paxman suggested that 'some of the claims being made for the internet are hugely exaggerated' but Bowie stuck to his guns and joked about the 'far-fetched predictions' made at the time of the arrival of the telephone, that it would 'one day be found in every home'.

### Survival instinct

He also quoted Duchamp on how the piece of work is not finished until the audience come to it, and add their own interpretation; that what the piece of art is about is the grey space in the middle. 'That grey space in the middle is what the twenty-first century will be about.' Asked about why he felt the need to continue earning money, he replied 'Being working class I

Continued page 21



# Antonio Labriola: a strict Marxist?

*We examine the life and political approach of this Marxist political thinker.*

The Italian political thinker, Antonio Labriola (1843-1904) was described by Friedrich Engels as 'a strict Marxist'. However, he approached Marxism quite late in life and first mentioned Marx in 1883 in a review of Bärenbach's book on the social sciences (*Die Socialwissenschaften*).

Labriola started corresponding with Engels in 1890 and in the same year, with Filippo Turati, founder of the 'Italian Socialist Party', he wrote an address to the German Social-Democratic Workers' Party Congress in Halle. When the 'Italian Workers' Party' was founded at the Congress of Geneva two years later, Labriola was critical of its platform, and when that organisation became the 'Italian Socialist Party' in 1894 under the leadership of Turati, Labriola complained to him in the following terms:

'Socialists must ... be clear... they have to stop being little Jacobins and politicians... You want to make propaganda amongst the bourgeoisies, you want to make socialism nice. God help you in such a philanthropic feat, because in my view the bourgeoisies are only fit to be hanged. I will not be lucky enough to do that myself, but I do not want to do anything to contribute to a delay in that happening.'

According to Labriola the Party of the working class Party



Labriola

should have 'Masters' (in the sense of Teachers), and he seems to have had in mind people like Marx, Engels and himself. But he was clear that the Party should not have what he called 'a Jacobin ruling minority'. Furthermore he saw Turati as reformist, as he explained in 1891:

'[Turati's] eclecticism is not a consequence of [his] intelligence, neither of [his] immaturity, but it is a necessarily reflection of the world in which we live, where everything is subjective, arbitrary, incidental, and therefore there is not space for the organised science, for party discipline.'

In 1892, in a letter to Engels, he repeats this concept:

'Eclecticism will not disappear soon. It is not only the effect of an intellectual confusion, but it is the expression of a situation. When just a few more or less socialist individuals address themselves to ignorant proletarians who are apolitical and largely reactionary,



A 1950s illustration of the Sicilian uprising



it is almost inevitable that those individuals will be thought of as utopians and demagogues.'

But Labriola also thought that, via a combination of education and the necessity for workers to overthrow capitalism, this eclecticism (taking the form of opportunistic revisionism and reformism) would disappear in the longer term. In this sense Labriola was an optimist and is distinguished from other revolutionaries such as Lenin and Gramsci who held the pessimistic view that working-class self-determination was impossible and only coercion would be able to guide the masses.

Labriola became Engels's 'favourite' source and, in response to a bitter Turati, Engels wrote:

'As for (...) Labriola, the malicious tongue which you attribute to him may have a certain justification in a country such as Italy, where the socialist party, like all the other parties, has been invaded, like a plague of locusts, by that "classless bourgeois youth", of which Bakunin was so proud.'

In October 1892 Labriola had informed Engels about a banking scandal in the Banca Romana involving some members of the Italian Socialist Party, who he referred to as 'locusts'. The following year Labriola was heavily critical of the Party for its unsupportive position concerning the uprising of peasants, artisans, and industrial workers in Sicily, known as the *Fasci Siciliani*. It described this event as 'a poor souls' revolt', whereas Labriola saw in it the first example of Italian socialism in action.

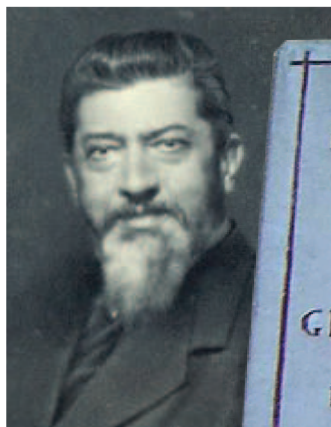
The main contribution of Labriola to Marxist thought did not come until several years after this when, in 1895, he published his first important work on the philosophy of historical materialism: *In Memory of the Communist Manifesto*. In this Labriola wrote:

'We must insist on the expression 'democratic socialisation of the means of production' because the expression 'collective ownership' mixes up legal expression with economic fact. It conjures up in many people's minds an increase in monopoly (...) and an ever resurgent State Socialism, whose effect is to augment

the economic means of oppression in the hands of the oppressing class (...) The proletarian mass either knows already or will understand that proletarian dictatorship, which will have to prepare the socialisation of the means of production, cannot proceed from an uprising



Edouard Bernstein



created by a few, but it must be and it will be the result of the proletarians themselves, who will have for a long time been a political organisation.'

Following this, Labriola published a further analysis of historical materialism from a philosophical standpoint (*The Materialist Conception of History*, 1895) and in 1898 he replied to the views of the French writer George Sorel in *Speaking on Socialism and Philosophy*. He also carried on actively criticising Turati's 'eclectic' politics and his socialist party, writing for example that 'in Italy there is no working class organisation and so the class struggle and the political party with a workers' base are premature'.

In this era of 'revisionist' politics, Labriola was active in combatting, for example, Enrico Ferri who tried to define Marxism as a derivative form of Darwinian evolutionism, and the German social-democrat Eduard Bernstein who took a similar position to Turati.

Labriola had already anticipated that Russia's so-called 'agrarian communism' could not be a path to socialist revolution and, in agreement with Engels, that Russia had to first go through a bourgeois phase of development (commodity production) before it could host a real emergence of socialist ideas. His views on Russian under-development, however, led to what many have seen as a kind of moral stain in his thought - his position on colonialism. He saw under-development as being resolved via colonisation by developed nations, so bringing under-developed nations to a material level at which socialist ideas could begin to have some resonance. It should be said that he changed his mind several times on this and seemed, before Engels's death in 1895, to agree with Engels that governments were too corrupt and bound to financiers and to the stock market to prevent investors taking over colonies and exploiting them rather than the lot of the masses there being improved.

However, in 1897, on the question of colonisation of Libya, Labriola seemed to fall back to his previous position, arguing that socialists should support the Italian government's attempts to colonise Libya on the grounds that 'there cannot be progress of the proletariat where the bourgeoisie is incapable of progress'. This was anathema to the Marxists of the time, though Amadeo Bordiga, an opponent of intervention in Libya and later one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, seemed to overlook this in aligning himself with Engels to praise Labriola's Marxist credentials.

After his death Labriola was read by and influenced Italian idealist philosophers such as Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile as well as by others claiming to be in the Marxist tradition such as Rodolfo Mondolfo, Antonio Gramsci and Lelio Basso and, outside Italy by Trotsky, Lenin and Plekhanov.

English translations of some of his writings can be found here: [www.marxists.org/archive/labriola/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/labriola/index.htm)  
CESCO



**Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog by Caspar David Friedrich, 1818**

# Nature as ideology

*As humanity's relationship with nature has changed so has the meaning of the concept.*

**N**ow that the reactionary ideology of Christianity has been banished to the history books most of us believe that our origin as a species was in nature. It is very ironic, then, that in some ways nature has replaced religion in its use as an ideological component within the values of those who oppose human progress.

The worshipers at this altar look to nature as a realm of unchanging certainty and romance. It is conceived as an entity that transcends human culture; a bastion of reality where human, as well as every other nature, is frozen forever in an ideological dogma of despair. The Green movement see a return to Mother Earth as their saviour and the right wing revel in their concept of nature as an exterminator of

weakness and compassion. How often is the metaphor of animal behaviour used to illustrate their contempt for the human struggle for reason and social justice? Perhaps a brief historical survey can illustrate how the concept of nature has been used to confront and deny cultural progress.

## **Unchanging**

'The Romantic Movement' can be understood as a reaction to the realities of France's bourgeois revolution of 1789/1793, which many believed to be the product of Europe's 'Enlightenment' and its belief in reason as humanity's guiding principle. This antithetical ideology centred on the emotions and the sublime within the natural world. Nature was



conceived of as transcending human reason and the culture it had produced. It was also used as a metaphor for the passions, which represented nature within humanity. It is still retained by many as the principle of life that transcends the creations of technology and the social institutions, including politics, of cultural evolution. Despite this assertion, or more probably because of it, nature has become a continuing motif of reactionary ideology; from nationalism to fascism, liberalism to environmentalism and from human rights to animal rights. It is, therefore, not surprising that these ideals appeal mainly to the emotions and not the intellect.

Rather than transcending politics nature has, ironically, become one of the main ideological ideas within both right and left wing propaganda. The transformation of the ideologies of the free market and the nation state into the natural 'deities' of the liberals and fascists respectively, evolved from the same romantic emotional approach to politics. Both point to 'human nature' as the origin of their values; individualism for liberals and collectivism for fascists. What unites both these 'wings' of reactionary ideology is their disbelief in, and fear of, social change.

Once an ideology is identified with nature it, much the same as religion, becomes fossilised and unchanging. The

species. This technological development changed not just our environment but it transformed our humanity. In doing so it also gave us the capacity to understand how and why it was doing so both culturally and politically.

Political consciousness (towards socialism) is a direct consequence of social relationships inherent within the mode of production which is itself contingent upon technological evolution. That this (capitalist) mode of production creates alienation between the producers of wealth and what they produce can be seen as a reason for the 'nostalgia' of a 'return to nature' which is exemplified by the ideologies referred to earlier. But it is not technology itself that is the cause of so much suffering and despair but the use to which it is put – production for profit and capital accumulation.

Of recent times this old debate has been transformed by global warming and its probable dire results on the environment that even the capitalist class will not be able to escape. As long as pollution was only exterminating other species and those who lived in the 'third world', few 'first world' intellectuals were very interested. We now have two camps, both fiercely committed to their respective positions, one of which promotes the ideology of global catastrophe and the other who sees it merely as a liberal conspiracy with which to criticise some aspects of the market system.

### Positive Development

That the 'natural' status of consumer capitalism is now under general debate can only be a positive development from a socialist point of view. Even without this catastrophic 'sword of Damocles' hanging over the world socialists were - and still are - just as concerned about the impact everyday pollution is having on our environment. What we do not invest in, ideologically, is the moral superiority so manifest by the liberal participants in this debate because we know that any variation of capitalism would not, and could not, prevent global warming. In what is surely an expression of a most staggeringly complacent smugness some claim to be delighted that the planet is somehow 'fighting back' and that without the 'plague' of mankind it will return to some 'natural' balance. You can be sure that when these people's houses are under threat from forest fires or flooding that their voices will be the loudest and shrillest in apportioning blame and calling for help.

Whenever 'nature' is used as a concept in debate you can be sure that there lurks beneath it a reactionary ideology (of either left or right). Socialists use the concept neither to support genetic determinism (unchanging human nature) nor in terms of a rose tinted romantic return to a utopian paradise. To be human is, primarily, to produce; to transform nature socially. That this can be done without the waste and pollution of capitalism is central to our cause.

A friend said recently that his boss had gone to China to clinch a deal for the manufacture of new computer hardware that they had developed. When I asked if his boss would concern himself with the working conditions and possible levels of pollution when making his decision my friend turned to me with a look of surprise at my seeming naivety, saying: 'Oh no, he just wants to confirm the lowest price of production'. Then upon anticipating my next question he said: 'If we didn't compete by getting the lowest price for labour we would go bankrupt quickly.' So there we have it, without ideological bias, a bald statement of the reality that without pollution there could be no capitalism and vice-versa.

**WEZ**



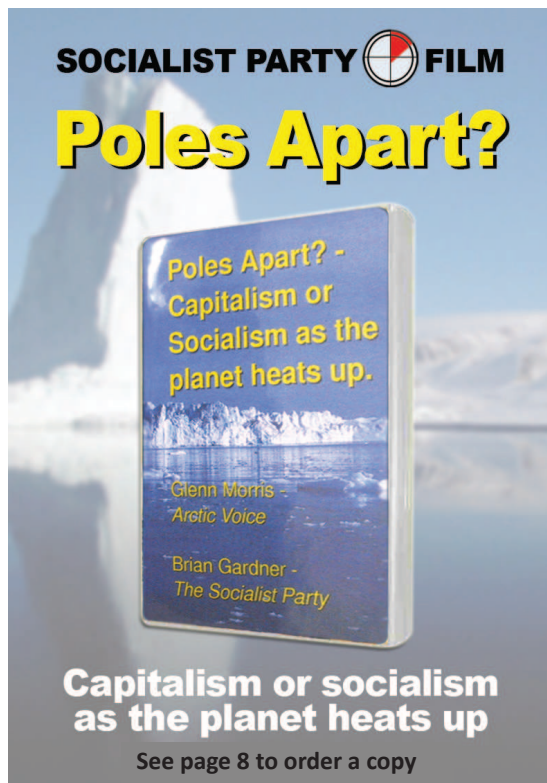
*Mother Nature image from a 17th century alchemical text*

owners of wealth and power in this capitalistic culture of ours obviously prefer an ideology that seeks to deny the concept of profound social change. It is therefore unsurprising that their media continues to relentlessly pump out this kind of propaganda. Let us take a rest from their sound track to our lives and consider another version of what it is to be human:

### Being human

The first hominids made their appearance about 3 million years ago. The subsequent success of the naked ape has led some to claim that Homo sapiens is now the dominant species on the planet. This is contestable in the light of the innumerable viruses and insects but it would be illogical to deny our impact on the world for good and ill. Many have conjectured that it is our long learning childhood that gives us the ability to override any 'natural instincts' and so adapt quickly which is responsible for this success. Other creatures possess nominal cultural characteristics (occasional tool making, language etc.) but none have become as completely dependent on their technological creations as has our

## Obituary: Vladimir Sirotin



We were shocked to hear that our comrade Vladimir Sirotin has died in Moscow at the age of 50.

Vladimir was born in Kharkov (Eastern Ukraine). His lecturer parents encouraged him to think critically. In a sketch of his life he wrote: 'I was very interested in the question of the nature of Soviet society. I realized early on that it was not socialism of any kind. At first I thought that the USSR [was] a special formation, a new class society. . . Later, during my student years, I came to the conclusion that it was state capitalism.'

Vladimir graduated from the Institute of Culture. For a brief period in the late 1980s and early 1990s he was able to publish his work openly in *Moscow News* and other periodicals. Then the door to official publication was again closed to him and he was able to obtain only irregular employment.

Besides the analysis of Soviet society, Sirotin had two special areas of interest – the rights of children and adolescents and (in recent years) the struggle against Russian nationalism and fascism. Some of his translated writings on the first theme can be found at [stephenshenfield.net](http://stephenshenfield.net) (see 'Research & Analytical Supplement to JRL, Special Issue No. 45' under 'Archives').

Vladimir reached the conclusion that his views coincided with those of the World Socialist Movement. He contributed two guest articles to *The Socialist Standard*: 'The Myth of Soviet "Socialism"' (November 2009) and 'Xenophobia in Russia' (January 2010). He joined the SPGB in 2013. **STEFAN**



### But who owns the machines?

'STEPHEN HAWKING Says We Should Really Be Scared of Capitalism, Not Robots' wrote Alexander C Kaufman, the Business Editor of the *Huffington Post*, last 8 October. Hawking didn't actually use the word *capitalism* but he might as well have done:

'If machines produce everything we need, the outcome will depend on how things are distributed. Everyone can enjoy a life of luxurious leisure if the machine-produced wealth is shared, or most people can end up miserably poor if the machine-owners successfully lobby against wealth redistribution. So far, the trend seems to be toward the second option, with technology driving ever-increasing inequality.'

In one sense we are already in this position of being able to produce 'everything we need'. Not that machines operated by robots could now produce this on their own, but in the sense that machines operated by human labour could. But the outcome will depend on who owns the machines.

Hawking is envisaging what might happen, with ever-increasing mechanisation, in a society where the income of those who don't own

machines derives from working for those who do. One scenario is that, as production becomes more mechanised, fewer workers will need to be employed and so more and more people will have to depend on miserable state hand-outs to survive instead of on not so miserable wages.

He also offers an alternative scenario where the machine-owners are obliged to share their income, presumably through taxation, to provide an income and services for a growing number of non-employed. There are already groups advocating this but it is not going to happen because it goes against the economic logic of the system where production is geared to making profits with a view to accumulation as more capital rather than to satisfying people's needs.

How likely anyway is the first scenario of growing mass unemployment? This has been predicted many times but has never actually come about. Production and employment have continued to expand over time, even if in fits and starts. The growth in productivity resulting from mechanisation is not as fast as is often thought, only of the order of 1 to 2 percent a year; which is slow enough to allow the labour displaced to be reabsorbed in other activities (including machine building).

Also, if increasing

mechanisation were to lead to steadily growing unemployment this would have the effect of slowing down the introduction of machines. The mass unemployment would exert a strong downward pressure on wages and make it profitable for the machine-owners to employ workers rather than machines.

A minor example was reported in the *Times* (14 December):

'Garage owners said that the number of car-washing machines has more than halved in the past 15 years because they are struggling to compete with migrants doing the job by hand.... [T]he number of automated "rollover" car washes in Britain has more than halved, from about 9,000 to less than 4,200 in 2015. It is estimated that the number of dedicated handwashing sites has ballooned from 4,000 to at least 20,000 over the same 15-year period.'

So, while the effect of mechanisation under capitalism might not be as bad as some predict, the full benefits of it will not be able to be enjoyed until the machines are owned in common

by society as a whole. Then, and only, then will they be able to be used to turn out plenty for all, to be distributed in accordance with the principle of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'. This will never happen under capitalism, however much people lobby for (or against) it.







She

## Victim Porn

slowly edges through her darkened house, wide-eyed and terrified of making the slightest sound. She hears a window smash, and gasps, her eyes darting around looking for something to defend herself with. Her heart racing, she reaches out for – but it's too late. Her attacker strikes...

This could come from any one of many near-identical schlockumentaries lurking around your telly. 'Based on witness testimony', they package up peoples' traumatic experiences with slick reconstructions, ominous narration, and talking heads. A dozen or so programmes rigidly follow this formula, as if they've been churned out on a production line.

Imported from across the Atlantic, these shows have ended up on those also-ran channels which clutter up the ether. The Really channel boasts the most, including *Paranormal Witness*, *I Fell For A Psychopath*, *Stalked: Someone's Watching*, *My Ghost Story*, *Brainwashed*, *I Survived Evil* and *When Ghosts Attack*, while truTV screens *Fear Thy Neighbor* and *A Stranger In My House*. *A Haunting* can be viewed over on Pick, and CBS Reality brings us *I Survived* and *Ice Cold Killers*.

Whether the threat comes from a misfit neighbour (*I Survived Evil*, *Fear Thy Neighbor*), abusive partner (*I Fell For A Psychopath*), deluded cult leader (*Brainwashed*) or demonic spirit (*Paranormal Witness*, *When Ghosts Attack* etc.), each show's format is the same. Victims, family members, friends and police appear as talking heads. Their stories of being stalked, harassed or terrorised are then retold as reconstructions, filmed with trendy washed-out colours in under-lit rooms. The scenario tends to begin with a nice all-American family moving in to their perfect home. Cardboard boxes are carried in past the white-painted picket fence, while the voiceover says something like 'It was paradise. For a while...'. The dream home inevitably turns into a nightmare when the neighbour / partner / cult leader / spirit becomes troubling, then threatening, then murderous. The reconstructions make your eyeballs queasy with their shaky, blurry, slo-mo camerawork at jaunty angles. The scenes are rapidly, flashily



edited, with every emotion underlined by musical stings and crashes. Cliffhangers are timed to ad breaks, and the schlockiest sequences are repeated umpteen times as flash-forwards and recaps in a desperate attempt to keep us watching.

The most extreme of these shows is *I Survived Evil*, one episode of which featured a harrowing rape of a woman in front of her children. The family now has the drawn-out, grisly reconstruction as an added reminder of their ordeal. Series like *Cold Justice: Sex Crimes* and *Missing Persons Unit* (both truTV) detail how these crimes are investigated by the police, and therefore can at

least claim some educational value. The schlockumentaries tend to only focus on the crime itself. There's not even much emphasis on showing strength in the face of adversity, which might have been used to balance out the traumatic events with something more positive. Instead, the focus is on victims suffering, and women suffering in particular. These programmes seem to be made just to titillate with lurid misogynistic violence. They're the descendants of the nastiest '50s pulp novels and '60s exploitation films.

It's debatable whether these kinds of depictions of violence desensitise us to brutality, provide some sort of cathartic release, or both. The makers of these shows probably don't care as long as they attract enough viewers for the channels' adverts. Whatever other effects these shows may have, the best reaction to watching them is revulsion at how they repackage suffering as entertainment.

**MIKE FOSTER**



Stills from Syfy's 'Paranormal Witness'

## 'To End All Wars'

THE WORKING Class Movement Library in Salford is running an exhibition to mark the centenary of conscription in WW1 (it's on till the end of April). By late 1915, there were too many casualties and not enough volunteers, and the Military Service Act of January 1916 introduced conscription. The display contains both original documents and wall panels with illustrations and texts. It has a lot of interesting material, especially on the role of women in opposing the war and on opponents of the war who have previously been known mainly to their families. Presumably because of the library's holdings, it emphasises the role in resistance of the No-Conscription Fellowship and the Independent Labour Party, with particular attention to activities in the north west of England, towns such as Hyde and Bolton.

Altogether in Great Britain (the Act did not apply in Ireland), there were 16,000 conscientious objectors (COs); compare this to the over five million who fought. Taking a stand as a CO required a great deal of courage, and over 6,000 spent time in prison. There is a short account of the two Basnett brothers, who were sent

to Kinmel Park barracks in North Wales but escaped from there and managed to remain at large. Many COs agreed to undertake 'non-combatant' work, which involved things such as sewing mailbags and pulling ploughs: it was supposedly of national importance, but in fact its purpose was almost entirely punitive.

Alexander Haycock performed hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs, but was later the ILP MP for Salford West in 1923–4 and again 1929–31. Fenner Brockway, who helped found the NCF, did hard labour in Walton Prison in Liverpool, became a Labour MP and ended up in the House of Lords. Both stood for reforming capitalism.

Across the road, Salford Museum and Art Gallery is hosting an ongoing series of exhibitions on the war under the theme 'Salford Remembers'. This has some displays on the allotments developed locally to support the war effort, and material on Salfordians who were COs, nurses or soldiers, including some killed in France or at Gallipoli.

It also notes that eleven COs from Greater Manchester died in prison or shortly after their release. No COs were executed, but mistreatment led to the deaths of quite a few.

**PB**

## Council Communist

**Gary Roth. *Marxism in a Lost Century: A Biography of Paul Mattick*. Chicago. Haymarket Books, 2015.**



This biography will be of special interest to many readers of the Socialist Standard. While Paul Mattick (1904–1981) never joined the World Socialist Movement (WSM), his views were sufficiently close to ours for him to be

a major contributor of articles and book reviews to the *Western Socialist*, journal of the World Socialist Party of the US, from the late 1940s to the late 1950s.

Mattick's life spanned eras and continents. In his youth he participated in the grassroots upheavals in Germany that followed in the wake of World War One as an activist in the movement that came to be known as 'council communism' (Rätekommunismus). In 1926 he moved to the United States and settled in Chicago, where his main involvement was with the unemployed movement that developed in the early 1930s. He was a prolific writer in several genres – journalism, fiction, and travel writing as well as social criticism and political economy.

It is convenient to consider the book in three parts. Chapters 2–4 portray the life and activity of the young Mattick in Germany. Chapters 5–9 focus on his activism in the US in the late 1920s and the 1930s. The main theme of the remaining chapters is Mattick's tireless efforts to develop and disseminate his ideas.

Paul Mattick grew up under harsh conditions in the poor family of an unskilled worker, first in rural East Prussia (now in Poland) and then in Berlin. He left school at the age of 14 to become an apprentice toolmaker in the Siemens concern. At about the same time he became politically active – first in the Free Socialist Youth, the youth group attached to the Social Democratic Party, and later in the Communist Workers' Party of Germany (German abbreviation – KAPD), a 'left communist' breakaway from the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).

Chapters 3 and 4 provide a valuable account of the formation, evolution, and decline of the KAPD. The KAPD and like-minded council communist groups in other European countries opposed both the classical social-democratic model of the parliamentary party and the Leninist model of the vanguard party ('the revolution is no party matter'). As their name indicates, they envisioned workers' councils as the organisational vehicle of

revolutionary action.

In contrast to the KPD, which quickly came to depend financially and politically on the Bolshevik regime, the KAPD maintained an independent outlook and developed an analysis of the new state-capitalist system emerging in Russia.

During the first few years after his emigration Mattick was preoccupied with the practical problems of adapting to life in a new country. He found a provisional political home in the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or 'Wobblies').

From 1932 onward Mattick played a prominent role in the effort to organise the unemployed in Chicago, who at the height of the Great Depression accounted for 40 percent of the city's workforce. He worked through the Workers' League, an unemployed affiliate of the Proletarian



Paul Mattick

Party – a group that (like the WSPUS) had its origins in the Socialist Party of Michigan. Mattick and his colleagues – a word he preferred to 'comrades' – based their organising work in the network of abandoned storefronts that unemployed workers took over and used as local 'relief stations' (with kitchens and sleeping quarters), meeting places and print shops.

Mattick also succeeded in creating a fairly small but active group of council communists under the name of the United Workers' Party, with a journal entitled *International Council Correspondence*.

The author devotes a great deal of space to the efforts made by Mattick over many years to interest left-wing editors and publishers in his writings. With few exceptions, such as the *Western Socialist*, the influence of Leninism within the left made these efforts fruitless until the New Left finally came to his rescue in the late 1960s. The West German student movement in particular began to show an interest in Mattick as a living link with the country's 'revolutionary' past.

Mattick was in touch at various times with numerous left-wing scholars who he hoped would help him gain public recognition and get his work published. The author provides considerable detail about these interactions. However, it is disappointing that for some reason he

ignores Mattick's close relations with the WSPUS and its members during the period when he and his family were living in Boston.

There is also some scattered information about the content of Mattick's writing – not as much as the reader might wish but as much as can reasonably be expected in a biography. Special attention is rightly paid to Mattick's main contributions to Marxian political economy. Best known is his critique of Keynesian economics, which finally appeared in book form in 1969 under the title *Marx and Keynes: The Limits of the Mixed Economy*. Mattick showed that government intervention could modify the workings of capitalism only temporarily and within definite limits.

Mattick also had a persistent interest in the theory of the business cycle and capitalist crisis. Here he was greatly influenced by Henryk Grossman, whose work *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System* happened to come out just before the stock market crash of 1929. Grossman's analysis relied heavily on the schema at the end of the second volume of Marx's *Capital* and the first section of the third volume, and stressed the crucial role played by the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, as well as constraints on an ever-rising mass of profit. Following Grossman, Mattick believed that capitalist crisis does not automatically lead to socialist revolution but does create an 'objectively revolutionary situation.' However, Grossman – a member of the Communist Party of Poland – had concepts of revolution and the post-revolutionary society very different from those of Mattick.

Besides its political and theoretical content, Roth's biography of Mattick is of great human interest. It tells us a lot about what life was like at various times for working people in both Germany and the United States. The book is worth reading for that alone.

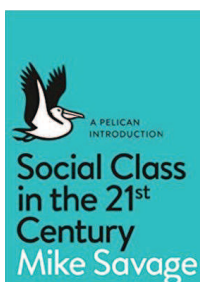
STEFAN





## Top, Middle and Bottom

Mike Savage et al: *Social Class in the 21st Century*. Penguin £8.99.



This book is based on the findings of the Great British Class Survey (see [www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22000973](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22000973)), previously discussed in the Socialist Standard in May 2013. This was launched on the BBC website

in 2011, and the analysis here derives from an impressive first round of 161,000 responses, supplemented by further face-to-face interviews, as those who took part in the online survey were disproportionately higher up in the social scale and living in England.

The authors distinguish three kinds of capital (this term is not used in the Marxist sense of means of production used to employ wage labour for the sake of profit). Economic capital is a person's income and wealth (savings and the value of their home). Cultural capital, a concept taken from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, is a matter of a person's tastes and interests, and is divided into two kinds: highbrow (going to art galleries, eating in French restaurants, liking jazz, etc) or emerging (using the internet, going to the gym, spending time with friends and so on). Social capital relates to your social networks, the kinds of people you know and how well you know them (knowing 'the right people' may help you get a job with a law firm but won't help with a job in IT).

Based on these criteria, no fewer than seven social classes are identified: elite, established middle class, technical middle class, new affluent workers, traditional working class, emerging service workers and precariat. A person's place in this is determined by their income and savings, their 'score' for the range of people in different occupations they know (boosted by knowing those in higher status jobs), and their cultural capital. For instance, new affluent workers will have on average household income of £29,000 and little in savings (so 'affluent' is something of a misnomer), and be roughly in the middle in terms of the value of their house. But they score quite highly for their range of social contacts and they have rather more emerging than highbrow cultural capital. Though social class in the way used here is not directly linked to occupation, the authors have stated elsewhere that members of this class might well work as electricians, postal workers and catering assistants, among others.

The classes falling between the elite and the precariat do not form a simple hierarchy, but are clearly distinguished from those at the top and bottom. The precariat, forming about 15% of the population, have an average household income of just £8,000 and very little in savings, and get low scores for cultural and social capital. They are often stigmatised, and women in this class were well aware that they were at the bottom of the heap, while men were 'more resistant' to consideration of class.

In contrast, the elite had average household income of £89,000, with sizeable savings and valuable houses; they had extensive social contacts and scored particularly highly for highbrow cultural capital. They form about 6 percent of the population, so they are far more than just the top 1 percent (compare Thomas Piketty's discussion of the '9 percent', those in the top 10 percent but not in the top 1 percent, who they are clearly distinguished from). This income (which is for the household and so may include more than one wage) is well above the average but of course is very small when compared to the really top incomes, of millions a year, for those who may have billions in wealth and several large mansions. And assets accumulated from the past (whether savings or houses) are far more important than current income. There is relatively little mobility into this elite, and also little down from it. As the richest get even richer and pull away from the rest of the population, so those lower down have much farther to go to get to the top (a larger hill to climb, in the metaphor used here).

The volume contains a lot of other interesting points, some related to changes in society. Highbrow cultural capital is increasingly confined to an older age group, and there are links between class and age: new affluent workers and emerging service workers are much younger on average than those in the traditional working class. Attending a prestigious university such as Oxford, Cambridge or the LSE is still a real help in joining the elite and so amassing large savings. Most people have more wide-ranging social ties than fifty years ago. Less than a third of respondents thought of themselves as belonging to a social class, though when pressed 62 percent 'gave themselves some kind of working class identity'.

But the classes identified here do not have shared interests as against the rest: nobody is ever going to say 'New affluent workers of the world, unite!', nor will they ever form a class for itself (Marx's term for a class conscious of its status and interests, mentioned in the Introduction). And, when all is said and done, an approach which puts dentists in the elite alongside multi-millionaires is missing quite a lot. **PB**

## From page 13

feel that there's never enough to leave my family. There's a kind of survival instinct.' He was not one to write overtly political songs, but his awareness of the corrupting power of money is evident, for example in his song *Red Money*:

'Oh, can you feel it in the way  
That a man is not a man?  
Can you see it in the sky  
That the landscape is too high?  
Like a nervous disease  
And it's been there all along.  
Project cancelled,  
Tumbling central,  
Red money.'

Superpower imperialism also came into his sights tangentially in songs like *This Is Not America*. In *Sons Of The Silent Age* he captured the stupefying idiocy of popular culture:

'Sons of the silent age  
Pace their rooms like a cell's  
dimensions  
Rise for a year or two  
Then make war  
Search through their one inch  
thoughts  
Then decide it couldn't be done'



Outside Bowie's New York apartment

But above all he had a genius for conveying, through his work, the experience of alienation. It is significant that he spoke in interviews about his reasons for having 'chosen' music as his medium, for he was primarily a universal artist who was also happy to work in visual art (he was a good painter and sculptor), who acted in many films and plays, who produced, directed and designed.

He never allowed himself to become part of that cosy establishment generally joined by the luminaries of the arts, including pop stars of a certain age. He refused honours from the queen of both a knighthood and a CBE. His legacy will be one of challenging, imaginative, boundary-smashing creativity throughout artistic endeavour.

**CLIFFORD SLAPPER**



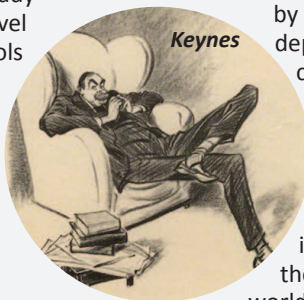
## 50 Years Ago

### The Keynesian Myth

THE BASIC proposition of the Keynesians comes to this: steady growth at full employment level can be kept if the State controls spending and investment so that when a boom

is developing it cuts down, and when a slump threatens it increases its spending.

Keynes had been a critic of *laissez-faire* for a long time before he wrote his *General Theory*. He was a member of the Liberal Party and sympathetic to the kind of State capitalist schemes the Fabians pushed. When he wrote this book he already had an international reputation as a leading economist. His book was given wide publicity because in it a well-known economist provided a theoretical justification for *policies already being tried* in the 1930's. Keynes's theories and policies—equalizing taxation, cheap money. State control—were eagerly spread by the Labour Party and “progressives” generally. After all, this was what they—and Keynes himself, for that matter—had long been advocating. Helped by these partisans Keynesian economics has become the dominant theory. In Britain it



completely conquered the universities and government departments. In America some conservative economists are still fighting a rearguard action on behalf of *laissez-faire* against Keynes' theories which they see as State Capitalism (to them “socialism”).

It is true that Keynesian economics is a theory of State Capitalism. It is a theory that Capitalism can be managed by professional economists from government departments. It is Fabianism in a new guise: capitalism run by “experts”.

In Britain the first Keynesian budget was that of 1940 so the “experts” have been in charge for over 25 years. How have they fared? Have they been able to control capitalism?

Under capitalism the market is the king; it decides what is produced and when. After the last war there was an expansion of the world market which, with a few minor upsets, has continued ever since. It is this expansion of the world market rather than State control which has been the major factor in the relatively full employment in some parts of the world.

This particular combination of circumstances has allowed the Keynesians to claim as the benefits of their “economic management” what in fact are the results of world market conditions favourable to the capitalists of the countries concerned.

(from article by A.L.B, *Socialist Standard*, February 1966)

## ACTION REPLAY

### Jimmy Hill: a man for all seasons

Jimmy Hill who died in December at the age of 87 grew up in South London and played football for Fulham FC, a first division (as the top league was then called) side. A busy inside forward; his beard and ski slope chin made him look like a buccaneer. Fans called him a rabbi and other names but always in banter. He became a folk hero at Craven Cottage.

A knee injury forced him to retire in 1961. Staying in the game he transformed lowly Coventry City from third division underachievers, into a progressive and family friendly football club. He changed Coventry's kit into sky blue and started up Sky Blue train specials to away games and Sky Blue children's parties. He understood and developed inclusiveness at Coventry City FC, before the word became part of every politician's lexicon.

However, it was his leadership of the Professional Footballers Association from 1955-61 which had a dramatically affected the game. In successfully opposing the maximum wage of £20 per week, the foundations of the modern game were laid.

How things have changed. Wayne Rooney reputedly earns £30k per week for plying his trade. An employee

earning 30k a year would need to work ten years to realise Rooney's weekly income. Such is the earning disparity between Premier League footballers and 'the man in the street'. No longer is football a working man's game.

Hill was a gifted speaker - persuasive, eloquent and logical. He understood the grievances of his fellow professionals and his irrefutable arguments often convinced the authorities of the necessity for change.

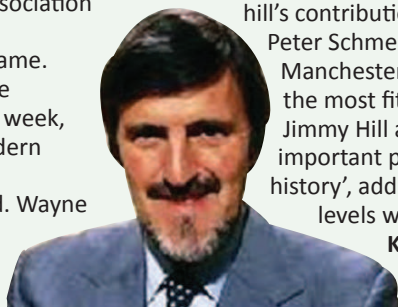
In 1967 he became Head of Sport with London Weekend Television and reinvented football on TV by introducing the role of the pundit. In 1973 he switched to BBC becoming the front man on *Match of the Day* remaining a forthright commentator.

Hill's final contribution was to his beloved Fulham. In 1987 he spent ten turbulent years as Chairman. Plans were mooted to merge with Queen's Park Rangers and sell Craven Cottage for housing. Adroitly utilising public outrage he steered the club through this passage and other crises.

Many eulogies have stemmed from ex-professionals regarding Jimmy Hill's contribution to football.

Peter Schmeichel, a former Manchester United player is the most fitting. He describes Jimmy Hill as one of 'the most important people in football history', adding 'on so many levels we owe you.'

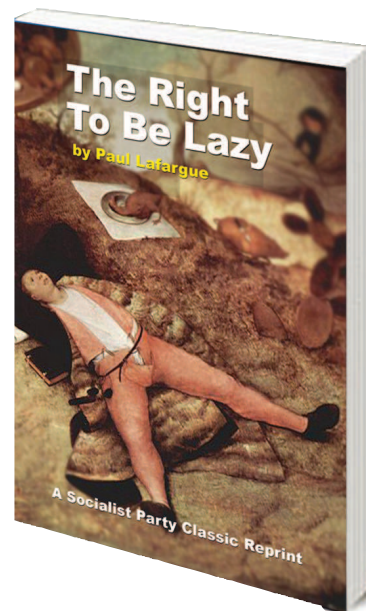
KEVIN



## Socialist Party Publications

### The Right to be Lazy

By Paul Lafargue



A reprint of Marx's son-in-law's classic text. Makes the clear point that any imaginary right to work under capitalism is just a wage slave's 'right' to be exploited. Includes a collection of other important articles written by Lafargue not easily available in print.

To order this or any other publication from the list below, complete the order form on page 8 and send it to the freepost address.



# Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

## Manchester Branch

Saturday 20 February 2016,  
2.00p.m. Discussion on Climate  
Change Venue: The Unicorn pub,  
26 Church Road, Manchester, M4  
1PW. Free admission

## Wakefield Socialist History Group

Saturday 27 February 2016,  
1.00p.m. "William Morris:  
Revolutionary Socialist or  
Utopian Dreamer" Socialist Party  
Speaker: Bill Martin Venue: The  
Red Shed, 18 Vicarage Street  
South, Wakefield, WF1 1QX. Free  
admission. Free light buffet.

## Brighton Discussion Group

Tuesday 8 March 2016, 7.45p.m.  
– 9.45p.m. Group discussion  
on "Thoughts on Religion and  
Socialism" Venue: Pelham  
Room (first floor – lift available),  
The Brighthelm Centre, North  
Road, Brighton, BN1 1YD. Free  
admission

## Kent and Sussex Regional Branch

Saturday 19 March 2016, from  
12.00 noon. Canterbury Street  
Stall. In the Parade pedestrian  
precinct

## Annual Conference

Friday 25 March 2016, 10.30a.m.  
– 5.00p.m. and Saturday 26  
March 2016, 10.30 a.m. –  
5.00 pm. The Socialist Party's  
premises, 52 Clapham High  
Street, London, SW4 7UN. Free  
admission.

## EC Meeting

Saturday 7 February, Socialist  
Party's premises, 52 Clapham  
High Street, London, SW4 7UN.  
Correspondence should be  
sent to the General Secretary.  
All articles, letters and notices  
should be sent to the Editorial  
Committee.

## Declaration of Principles

*This declaration is the basis of our  
organisation and, because it is also an  
important historical document dating  
from the formation of the party in 1904,  
its original language has been retained.*

### Object

**The establishment of a system of society  
based upon the common ownership  
and democratic control of the means  
and instruments for producing and  
distributing wealth by and in the interest  
of the whole community.**

### Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is  
based upon the ownership of the means  
of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.)  
by the capitalist or master class, and the  
consequent enslavement of the working  
class, by whose labour alone wealth is  
produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an  
antagonism of interests, manifesting itself  
as a class struggle between those who  
possess but do not produce and those  
who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished  
only by the emancipation of the working  
class from the domination of the master  
class, by the conversion into the common  
property of society of the means of  
production and distribution, and their  
democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution  
the working class is the last class to  
achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the  
emancipation of all mankind, without  
distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the  
work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government,  
including the armed forces of the nation,  
exists only to conserve the monopoly  
by the capitalist class of the wealth  
taken from the workers, the working  
class must organize consciously and  
politically for the conquest of the powers  
of government, national and local, in  
order that this machinery, including  
these forces, may be converted from an  
instrument of oppression into the agent  
of emancipation and the overthrow of  
privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but  
the expression of class interests, and  
as the interest of the working class is  
diametrically opposed to the interests of  
all sections of the master class, the party  
seeking working class emancipation must  
be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain,  
therefore, enters the field of political  
action determined to wage war against  
all other political parties, whether alleged  
labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls  
upon the members of the working class  
of this country to muster under its banner  
to the end that a speedy termination may  
be wrought to the system which deprives  
them of the fruits of their labour, and  
that poverty may give place to comfort,  
privilege to equality, and slavery to  
freedom.



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Homeless in Los Angeles

## Down and out

'There is a war on, and it concerns the homeless' right to sleep. Across the United States, recent years have seen a spate of municipal laws that criminalise the act of sleeping in public places. These laws often target the act of sleeping in private vehicles under the guise of *anti-camping* legislation' (altnet.org, 2 January). Wrong! The war in question has been correctly identified by none other than Warren Buffett: 'there's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning.' Consider, the 400 richest Americans now have more wealth than the bottom 61 percent of the population and every 38 seconds a U.S. citizen dies of poverty and poverty-related social conditions. There are over 578,000 sleeping rough in the US alongside at least 10 million unoccupied homes. Houses are built for profit not need. Thus, particularly during a slump, brick mountains, empty houses, mothballed developments, and unemployed builders exist alongside the homeless and those existing in sub-standard accommodation.

'There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning.'

## They have the technology

'Boyalife Group and its partners are building the giant plant in the northern Chinese port of Tianjin. It is due to go into production within the next seven months and aims for an output of one million cloned cows a year by 2020. But cattle are only the beginning of chief executive Xu's ambitions. In the factory's pipeline are also thoroughbred racehorses, pets, police dogs specialised in searching and sniffing, and even humans' (dailymail.co.uk, 1 January). The future is bright! The future is full of cloned, iron-heeled dictators, Erdoğan, Kardashians and Trumps. Meanwhile, they can comfort themselves with a cloned version of their pet dog for a mere \$100,000.



Soweto township, South Africa

## Freedom for them

'Something important and, freedom lovers may think, rather wonderful seems to have happened at the United Nations, and it went largely unreported in mainstream media. The UN General Assembly approved a draft resolution *Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources*' (dissidentvoice.org, 1 January). Campaigners for Palestinian 'freedom', who often argue that sanctions brought down the apartheid regime of South Africa and they are what will bring down the apartheid regime of Israel, ignore the lesson of history. The election of the ANC to power was supposed to see the grinding poverty of the townships ended, but the ANC have turned out to be powerless to run capitalism in a way that would end exploitation and poverty. Capitalism means the continuation of war and want. Workers have no country.

## FREE LUNCH

